

County Line

News from the Government Offices of Lumpkin County, Georgia



Vol. 4, No. 1

May 2008

Progress Report: Judicial Center

Financing arranged? Check. Site plan approved? Check. Conceptual drawings of building exterior? Presented to board of commissioners. Floor plans? Approved. Despite some differences of opinion about financing and location early in the project's timeline, progress has continued on the county's new judicial center. Among the planned features of the new courthouse: More than 300 parking spaces, a three-quarters of an acre park area, brick facing, a "triple layer" of security, a traditional sweeping staircase in the lobby and other architectural features that will make the three-story building warm and attractive while expressing respect for the law as a community value. Architects and engineers have involved the building's ultimate users—including Enotah Circuit and Lumpkin County judges, the clerk of court, court service personnel, the sheriff's office and others—in the planning process from the beginning, and from all indications those stakeholders are extremely pleased with the results. If all goes according to plan, a groundbreaking ceremony could be held as soon as June.



Play It Safe at Summer Camp

Sure, kids are all different. But when it comes to the long, hot summer vacation, there are two things they all need: fun and a safe environment. The Lumpkin County Parks and Recreation Department has both for kids from first through eighth grade. Registration is underway now for the Summer Day Camp, which will be held weekdays from Monday, June 2 to Friday, July 25 from 8am to 6pm daily. The camp offers organized activities, free play, swimming and field trips. Campers bring their own lunches and afternoon snacks are provided. Registration fee is \$15; camp fee is \$55 per week plus the cost of optional field trips. For information or to register, call Ritchie Anderson at (706) 864-3622.

Strategic Planning Underway

There is planning and then there is *strategic planning*. For most governments and many businesses, planning is sort of like the organizational equivalent of making New Year's resolutions. Despite the best intentions, the plans rarely have any lasting influence on actual behavior and are usually shelved and forgotten within a few months—if not weeks. Wanting to get more out of the county's planning than that, county manager Stan Kelley proposed bringing in a planning professional. The Board of Commissioners approved the first phase of a program provided by the Centre for Strategic Management. Consulting partner Frank Foster has been working with commissioners, the county manager, elected officials and department heads over the past several months. Through the process of strategic management, Foster says, the county government is identifying the long term needs and requirements of its stakeholders, developing strategies to meet those requirements and identifying resources needed to implement them. Strategic planning ensures that departmental plans fit with the county's overall strategic direction, that everyone is committed to the planning and implementation processes and that everyone is headed in the same direction, Foster explains. Achievement of each strategy is measurable, and a three to five year planning horizon is always kept in sight. Results of the first phase of the strategic planning process will be released soon.



And the Award Goes to . . .

Lumpkin County received a Financial Excellence Award in March, recognizing the county's comeback strategy and remarkable recovery over a seven-year period after a fiscal crisis nearly brought the government to its knees in 2000. The award was part of an annual County Excellence award competition sponsored by the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) and Georgia Trend Magazine. This year, nine judges on an impartial public-private committee reviewed a total of 42 applications in three broad population groups and various service categories. Lumpkin and the winners of 7 other categories were highlighted in the March edition of Georgia Trend. To read the article, visit www.georgiatrend.com and click on Archives/Business & Industry.



County Is "Stronger Than Ever"

Commission chairman Steve Gooch spoke to a group of about 175 citizens and regional friends at Lumpkin County's first ever "Great State of Lumpkin County" address in March. His message: Lumpkin County is stronger than ever. Sponsored by the Lumpkin County Development Authority and the Timken Company, the event highlighted points of significant county progress over the past few years, focusing on the years since the board of commissioners form of government was instituted in 2005. Among the most notable areas of accomplishment were quality of life, such as recreation and growth management; infrastructure expansion; primary services, such as fire and emergency services, law enforcement and recycling programs; staff development and retention and ongoing fiscal management.



No Excuses to Not Vote

Voting has never been easier. If you won't be able make it to the polls on Election Day July 15, you can vote absentee in person beginning June 2. If you just don't want to go to the polls on Election Day, you can vote in advance in person the week before. Rather vote from the comfort of home? Vote by mailing or faxing in your ballot by July 11. In person or by mail. In advance or on Election Day. It's all about convenience these days, so there's no excuse to not vote! Visit www.lumpkincounty.gov/registrar or call (706) 864-6279 for all the details. If you're not registered already, be sure to register by June 16 to vote in the General Primary July 15.



Lumpkin County . . . continued from reverse side

Part 1: SPLOST Retires Debt

When Lumpkin County collateralized its public buildings and took out a \$16 million loan to claw its way out of a fiscal crisis in 2001, there was debt as far as the eye could see—15 years into the future. Rather than pay off the loan over the full 15 years and have nothing to show for it when the last payment was made in 2015, Lumpkin County voters elected to pay the debt off early by extending collection of an expiring Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. They voted to commit all revenue from that SPLOST to paying down the debt. In March 2008, just 7 years into the loan period, the debt was fully retired, saving millions of dollars in interest and closing a painful chapter in the county's history.

Part 2: New SPLOST Funds Progress

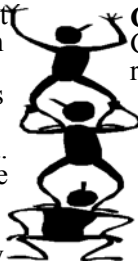
As the SPLOST that paid down the 2001 loan came to an end in March, collection of a new Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax began in April. This one percent SPLOST will be collected for six years to pay for projects that will help push the community forward. It will fund debt service for the new county judicial center and for the city of Dahlonega's new water treatment facilities. The SPLOST will also help fund 11 other projects important to the county's future: water & sewer infrastructure expansion, library facilities, roads and bridges, renovation to rework the existing courthouse into a dedicated county administration building, public safety vehicles, park and recreation facilities, industrial development property, fire protection facilities, a public warning system, E911 equipment and public works equipment.

Lumpkin Leaders Selected for Army Strong Experience

When the Army went looking for a few good leaders to participate in its *U.S. Army Strong Experience* in Fort Benning, Georgia, it chose two right here in Lumpkin County: County manager Stan Kelley and Development Authority chairman Mike Cottrell. The county manager said the event, designed to connect America's leadership with America's Army, was a great experience. "It was an honor to be chosen to attend this event," he said. "It reaffirms the awesome sense of pride I have in the men and women serving our nation." Rainy skies cancelled the former military officer's planned tandem parachute jump—which would have been his first jump in 20 years.

A River Runs Through It

After several years of discussion and negotiation, Lumpkin County has signed a 99-year lease with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the stewardship of 92 acres of undeveloped land fronting Highway 60 near Georgia 400. The agreement ensures that a substantial amount of green space will remain there well into the foreseeable future, even as commercial and residential growth eventually encroach on the area. The Chestatee River runs through the property on its way to Lake Sidney Lanier, and plans call for a canoe launch area on a portion of the land where archeological studies have been completed. About 78 acres of land must remain untouched until its archeological significance can be measured. Development of the canoe launch area for public access will take place in stages as the county budget allows.

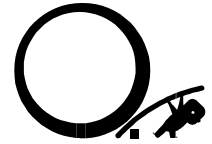


Community Supports Mohawk Workers

Georgia Department of Labor staffers say they can't remember seeing a community respond to a plant layoff with such enthusiasm and cooperation. Mohawk Industries' Dahlonega plant closing in June will separate 366 workers from their jobs. In addition to a wealth of services from the state, Lumpkin County, the city of Dahlonega, the city's and county's development authorities, Chamber of Commerce and a wide range of social service agencies are helping connect laid off workers with job opportunities and to reduce the impact of joblessness on workers and families. With all this support behind them, there's every reason to believe these displaced workers will be able to pick up the pieces and get settled into new positions fairly quickly.

County Staffers "Pinned" for Service

Service pins have been awarded to 31 Lumpkin County government employees who mark 5 year, 10 year and 15 year lengths of service this year. County manager Stan Kelley, Michael P. Benna with the Fire/EMS department and Lloyd Brewer and Judy Parker with the Lumpkin County Sheriff's Office were all hired by the county in 1993 and received pins for reaching 15 years of service this year. Nine staffers were recognized for a decade of service and another 18 will celebrate 5 year anniversaries this year. The commissioners thanked all of the employees for choosing and sticking with careers in public service with Lumpkin County.



Working for You!

If you have a problem, question or concern involving your county government, answers and assistance are as close as your phone or computer. For contact information for county departments or commissioners, see Dept. and Contact Info., www.lumpkincounty.gov or call (706) 864-3742.

Board of Commissioners

Steve Gooch, Chairman
Dr. John Raber, District 1
Deborah Hutcheson, District 2
Clarence Stowers, District 3
Clarence Grindle, District 4

Stan Kelley
County Manager

Lumpkin County
99 Courthouse Hill
Dahlonega,
Georgia 30533
(706) 864-3742
Fax (706) 864-4760
www.lumpkincounty.gov

Trimming Down the Payroll

With an economic downturn putting the squeeze on its already-skin tight budget, the county has adopted a hiring freeze of sorts to save money. The directive against hiring new personnel isn't really a freeze, strictly speaking, because it leaves some flexibility to hire if filling the position is deemed absolutely necessary. But it calls for careful evaluation of any open positions on a case-by-case basis to see whether job responsibilities can be shared, shifted or even done away with to save salary and benefits costs. Some shifting of job responsibilities has already taken place in several departments this year. The goal is to trim the payroll as opportunities arise while continuing to offer the current level of service.

